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serve—that of creating the habit of concrete, definite expression. It soon becomes quite plain to the youngsters that Kipling gains a great deal of the force by his concreteness, as in: “they were so hungry they ate rats and beetles and rock-rabbits”; “he took flour and water and currants and plums and sugar and things, and made himself one cake which was two feet across and three feet thick”; and “the elephant’s child asked questions about everything that he saw or heard or felt or smelt or touched.” With such illustrations in mind they no longer have their hero go “a long distance” or locate the story in “a small town”; the long distance becomes five dreary miles, and the small town, Cartersville.

EVA A. RUMBLEY

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### PARAGRAPHS AS TRAINS

Frequently my students, in fun or perhaps in jest, refer to the passing trains as “paragraphs.” An explanation may be found in the following comparison which, with good results, I often enlarge upon in the classroom.

A paragraph is like a train. The train must have an engine just as a paragraph must have a topic sentence, for as the engine supplies the power for the one, so the topic sentence holds the dynamic for the other. Just as a train is made up of a number of different kinds of cars, so a paragraph is composed of a variety of sentences. As in the one, however, the cars must be closely linked, so in the other the sentences must be smoothly joined. As a train must run along a well-prepared track, which has been cut through the hills and bridged over the streams, so the paragraph must follow a well-defined line of thought which has smoothed out the rough places and filled in the valleys. As the one carries the commerce and travel of the world, so the other conveys the thoughts and ideas of the mind.

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### COMPOSITION THAT SEEMED WORTH WHILE

Not all high-school pupils write perfunctorily, though I readily admit that many of them do. Very few of us, however, do anything with enthusiasm unless it happens to fit our fancy or appeals to us as being especially worth while. Composition work has to be vital or ten to one the pupil will find it more lifeless than Latin—if one thing

can be more lifeless than another; at any rate it will be infinitely more tiresome, and the work that he gives it will be in exact proportion to his interest.

This year I had a class of Seniors and postgraduates in "advanced composition," so called principally to coax the ambition of its members. Firmly believing that much depended upon the teacher in the interest the course might develop, I started in with fire in my eye, which I saw reflected in the eyes of the students for about two weeks. It was not surprising that the gleam slowly faded, however, for the grammar reviews that I assigned at the beginning—which many of them sorely needed—were not exciting enough to make them especially nervous. That light of interest came and went spasmodically as we took up new phases of the work. A particularly good paper they never failed to appreciate, and the stories that we found and criticized in the current magazines were responsible for much of our animation.

However, there were days when I was discouraged, when it seemed as though we were not accomplishing enough. I had tried to arouse the ambition and pride of the students by assuring them of ability, unusual and heretofore hidden. But the general response was, "Aw, I can't write anything!" and finally the conviction that they couldn't, born of the frequent repetition, began to settle upon me. It was interrupted occasionally by a paper that startled me, and once I was thoroughly excited. This particular theme was a character-sketch that had a great deal of possibility, I thought.

At a reckless moment, when I wanted to give the pupils something *different*, I hit upon the plan of sending something away, and I sent the sketch to the *Outlook*. I took it to a late train that very night before I could change my mind, and went home to worry about the foolish move—worry that was increased in a few days when the parent felt that the manuscript should have been sent to *Everybody's*. Well, I decided that *Everybody's* should have the next chance at it, and tried to forget the whole affair except in my prayers, when I asked with fervor that the readers on the *Outlook* staff be in the proper mood when they came to our little paper. They surely were, for after three long weeks a letter came, containing, not a printed rejection slip, but a check for thirty dollars! Neither the little author nor her father were half as happy as I, for hadn't the incident proved what I had been preaching all the time—that composition work *is* worth while?

But the stimulus it gave that class!

The pupils sat up like plants after a shower; the gleam in their

eyes deepened to a steady glow, a pledge of the confidence that was coming over them. Everybody fairly bristled with energy, and it was immediately noticeable in the papers. My discouragement oozed away; I had been cranking my machine for over half the year, but at last the spark caught and my chief office was to be as careful a guide as possible. The rest of the term was real joy-riding!

(The story referred to is "The Manner of My Adoption" in the *Outlook* of May 12, 1912.)

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#### AN A-Z (AISY) METHOD FOR MARKING THEMES

- A is for Accurate; you have not said  
Precisely the thing that you had in your head.
- B is for Bravo; it means you have won  
Your teacher's approval; your work is well done.
- C stands for Construction; your sentence is weak  
Because it was not built with care, so to speak.
- D is for Doubtful; your meaning's in doubt;  
Ambiguity's fatal; cast the oaf out.
- E is for Emphasis; points that are strong  
First or last in the theme or the sentence belong.
- F is for Facts; you will scribble in vain  
If a grip on these churls you don't get and retain.
- G is for Grammar; your grammar's at fault;  
On the fortress of syntax you've made an assault.
- H is for Hackneyed; the story you've told  
In the days of Nebuchadnezzar was old.
- I stands for Instructions. Learn to obey.  
He who humbles himself is exalted, they say.
- J is for Joining; each sentence should lead  
By an easy transition from those which precede.
- K is for Key-Word; your title should be  
To open your subject an accurate key.
- L is for Length; your story's too long;  
Brevity marks most writing that's strong.